

A preferred coordinated system 10 includes a central control terminal 12 which communicates directly with a data base 14. The terminal 12 is programmed with the logic illustrated in Figure 2. The data base 14 preferably includes data regarding the preferences of prospective recipients of goods, such as types of flowers, colors, religion, non-profit organizations which may be the benefactors of monetary gifts, and other preferences.

The terminal 12 is preferably coupled to a global communications network 16, such as the Internet. One or more remote terminals 18a through 18n are also coupled to the network 16 for communicating with the terminal 12.

The terminal 12 may be physically located at a merchant's place of business, or it may be located at a service provider. In either case, security is provided to the data in the data base 14 so that the information provided is only accessible to the user of the control terminal. Data may be entered via the control terminal 12 either at the terminal 12 or through the network 16. A prospective registrant logs in and is permitted to enter data regarding the preferences for goods, such as for example flowers, arrangements, gifts, and the like. Then, another registrant may log in and express the same or different preferences, which may also include a price range, religious preferences, or other distinctive features of the flowers or gifts that the registrant prefers. Other registrants may also log into the system and similarly order goods.

The control terminal then schedules the delivery or filling of the orders by the various registrants over a period of time. That way, the requested goods, particularly perishable goods such as cut flowers, are not all delivered at the same time. The control terminal communicates with the data base 14, which is preferably maintained in a structured query language (SQL) for ease of cross reference to the various characteristics of the goods available and the goods ordered. The control terminal 14 also includes an inventory control program with access to the same SQL data base 14 to ensure that advertised goods are timely available.

Figure 2 illustrates a preferred logic for the program in the terminal 14. The

method illustrated in Figure 2 begins with a start routine 30 which loads up a registry in step 32. The registry preferably includes the preferences of the prospective recipient of the goods, but the registry may also be initiated by a single purchase from a registrant. Thus, the preferences may be specified by the prospective recipient or by registrants to the system. Once the registry is established, the prospective recipients may enroll their preferences into the system as previously described. The preferences are also preferably editable.

When the merchant, having control over the terminal 12, receives orders from registrants, a match is attempted with the preferences already established by the prospective recipient. The registrant is also provided with the option of ordering goods which are not within the preferences expressed by the recipient. The system then schedules the filling of the order or orders, and if more than one order is placed, the default setting for the system schedules delivery or filling of the orders at different times, *i.e.* over a time period.

This invention is equally applicable to environments other than florists. For example, needy people may call into a church or ministerial organization, requesting assistance. The system registers the prospective recipient, and records preferences, such as baby formula for an infant, clothing sizes for children and adults, and other preferences. Then, the system will schedule the filling of the preferences over time, such as perishable food items and the like. Other scenarios are equally applicable.

The principles, preferred embodiment, and mode of operation of the present invention have been described in the foregoing specification. This invention is not to be construed as limited to the particular forms disclosed, since these are regarded as illustrative rather than restrictive. Moreover, variations and changes may be made by those skilled in the art without departing from the spirit of the invention.